

**ROUND 2 QUICK QUOTES**  
April 5, 2024



**AKSHAY BHATIA (-11)**

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**Q. Akshay, how are you feeling today? How did you feel about the round overall?**

**AKSHAY BHATIA:** It was stressful, for sure, wasn't my best stuff. I felt like I struggled a lot off the tee today, golf swing didn't feel great with any of the longer stuff, but iron play was still phenomenal, wedges were good, made some nice putts. I know I'm reading the greens really good so I kind of understand when I'm missing putts right now why that's happening. So it's good, a good kind of understanding of kind of where I need to improve the next couple days.

**Q. Did anything kind of click or get back on track for you to finish as strong as you did the last few holes?**

**AKSHAY BHATIA:** Just try to focus on the right things, focus on the goals that I had to start the week and just tried really hard to do that. Hit some good shots, made a couple putts and it was good to kind of get the under-par round.

**Q. Did it feel different playing with the lead? Is there any challenge to working from ahead?**

**AKSHAY BHATIA:** I felt way calmer than I expected to and I don't know if that's a good thing or bad thing. It was definitely -- you know, it's different because you have expectations like, oh, I just shot 9 under so can I just do that again. It's not possible. I mean, this golf course is so hard, the wind was a lot trickier today, greens are getting firmer and firmer even in the morning. It's just kind of pace myself and try and execute.

**Q. Do you keep an eye on the leaderboard as you go through the round or do you actively avoid it? How do you approach that?**

**AKSHAY BHATIA:** No, sadly, I look at leaderboards. I don't know if it's a good thing or a bad thing again. I'll peek at it and it's fun, I guess. It's like when you're in a good spot and you're in contention, that's where you want to be and it's exciting. You look at that leaderboard and you say, wow, this is where I want to be. It's a good thing, I think.

**Q. It was very interesting yesterday hearing you talk about some of the changes you made mentally. Can you get more specific about that? Is it more of a calmness or different kind of focus? What's really changed in that regard?**

**AKSHAY BHATIA:** I've never had many goals. There's more day-to-day goals. Just learning a lot more how to handle certain things off the golf course has truly helped. I've



struggled a lot with anxiety and it's a really stressful -- it can be very stressful out here, so handling it the best way I can and talking a little better to myself makes a big difference. That's kind of where I've seen the growth so far the last couple weeks is just trying to improve just outside of golf and hopefully the golf kind of does what it does.

**Q. Was there a moment or something that happened that made you think you might want to reevaluate differently how you handle those situations or spark a change in that way?**

**AKSHAY BHATIA:** I just felt like this year I was close to playing good, I was just sneaking into the top-15s, top-20s. I hate missing cuts. I've missed plenty of cuts this year and that's not fun. It's just like looking at every day as a learning experience and really pinpointing like, hey, what could have been better. Last week being in contention, had the lead, I remember looking on hole 8 or 9, I knew I had the lead and I remember specifically six shots I should have backed off and that's where I kind of lost the golf tournament. So it's great to learn that stuff. That's where mentally I'm learning that versus beating myself up for not winning.

**Q. What's the plan from now until the start of your next round to avoid the stress or pressure that can come with this position?**

**AKSHAY BHATIA:** Just be myself. Not much. Look on my phone, watch YouTube, hang out.

**Q. Akshay, heck of a start. I know yesterday you would have loved to play as many holes as possible when you finished that round of golf. How do you carry over what was probably your best round as a pro yesterday into a really tidy round of golf again today?**

**AKSHAY BHATIA:** It's very hard. I think this is probably going to be the hardest day for me. It was weird because I didn't feel too stressed starting the round and I just, I struggled a lot off the tee and that's not good out here, but I managed my way.

I had a good goal starting the day, starting the tournament. I did a good job on the back nine and even if I didn't hit it that good, I still felt like I missed in the right spots and, you know, just kind of did the things I needed to do, just kind of get a not-so-good round to a decent score.

**Q. Are you conscious of how different today felt versus yesterday? I thought yesterday everything looked so free, it looked like golf was easy to you. Do you just have to remind yourself the old cliché of one shot at a time on a day like today or are you sort of consciously aware of the fact like you know what, today's going to scramble a little bit more than yesterday?**

**AKSHAY BHATIA:** I mean, you know you're going to battle adversity out here and I knew



that from the start. I hit it left off the tee on 10 and I said there it is, there's the adversity. I just had to battle today.

I know I can play well on this golf course. One shot at a time, it's hard to do. I know a lot of people can say they can do that, but it's really hard to do and think about one shot.

So all in all, it's a tough golf course, stressful golf course. I told my -- everyone on my team it's a tough track, you always feel like you're on your toes and you've got to hit some really quality shots and hopefully I can do that this weekend.

**Q. Does a golf course that keeps you on your toes allow you to stay focused in that process and not focused on -- really, you're four shots clear, you've played better golf than everybody on the property, but does the difficulty of the golf course allow you to stay focused on your game and not maybe what's going on with the rest of the tournament?**

**AKSHAY BHATIA:** I think experience, this is my third time playing here, so I think experience of knowing where to hit the golf ball is important. I feel like I've never really had that at any other golf course I've played on the PGA TOUR. So it does keep you on your toes, it keeps you a little more focused, but you've got to be focused on the right things. I think that's kind of like my caddie told me today, just focus on the right things. I've still got a lot of golf today.

**Q. All right. Experience as a pro off the golf course, you've got a lot of time until your tee time tomorrow. Do you stick to a routine when you're in a familiar city or are you still trying to find your best spot in San Antonio?**

**AKSHAY BHATIA:** Stick to the routine. Presleigh, my fiancée, and I, we met here three years ago, so it's a special place to us. I'll do my same thing, warm up the same and eat breakfast and do whatever. I don't have any specific things I want to do here, it's just a lot of rest. And this is my sixth week in a row, so I'm just trying to take it easy.

**Q. No first date anniversary plans this week? There's no big restaurant in your future, the first dining experience you had?**

**AKSHAY BHATIA:** We were planning to do it, but room service has kind of become the date night. Maybe tonight we'll go to our spot.

